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
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Presenter: Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld

Tuesday, April 1, 2003 - 2 P.M. EST

DoD News Briefing - Secretary Rumsfeld and Gen. Myers

(Also participating, Gen. Richard B. Myers, Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff. Slides and photos are at <http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Apr2003/g030401-D-6570C.html> , <http://www.defenselink.mil/photos/Apr2003/030401-D-9880W-138.html> and <http://www.defenselink.mil/photos/Apr2003/030401-D-9880W-091.html>

Rumsfeld: Good afternoon.

We are 12 days into the war. Coalition forces have made good progress in that still short period of time. To get a sense of how coalition forces are doing, I think it's useful to put yourself in Baghdad, in the shoes of those in the Iraqi regime, and ask "what do you think they're seeing after 12 days of war." They probably expected it would be much like the first Gulf War. It seems an awful lot of people in the world expected that it would be a lot like the first Gulf War.

In that case, as you'll recall, it was a sustained 38-day air campaign, followed by a brief ground attack. Instead, in this case, the ground attack actually started before the air war, with thousands of Special Forces pouring into all regions of the country and a large force rolling across the Kuwaiti border into southern Iraq.

Instead of taking several weeks to work their way through the south up to



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Baghdad with pitched battles taking place for each city along the way, coalition forces pressed through southern Iraq in less than a week. They took a key Iraqi seaport and secured most of the southern oil fields before the regime could destroy them and create an environmental disaster. They left follow-on forces to secure the cities they passed as they raced to the capital. They are now positioned within some 50 miles of Baghdad.

The ground invasion was followed a day later by an air campaign. Day and night coalition air power is degrading Iraq's command and control with strikes that are powerful, sustained and precise. The regime is -- has not lost, but is in the process of losing its ability to effectively communicate with its forces.

And what about the people of Iraq? In Baghdad, the Iraqi people are seeing that the coalition forces are striking regime and leadership targets, and sparing population centers. The majority of Iraqis do not support Saddam Hussein's regime. Their obedience is based on fear and that fear is beginning to slip away as coalition forces advance.

To keep people from welcoming coalition forces, and to prevent the regular army from surrendering or defecting, the regime is depending on execution death squads to maintain a climate of fear. They are vicious, to be sure, but they are now taking heavy losses, and the regime's tactics have been unable to slow or stop the coalition.

A growing number of Iraqi intelligence operatives around the world have been arrested, while others simply ignore their orders to attack coalition targets, waiting for the Iraqi regime to collapse.

And where are Iraq's leaders? The night before the ground war began, coalition forces launched a strike on a meeting of Iraq's senior command and control and they have not been heard from since. The fact that Saddam Hussein did not show up for his televised speech today is interesting.

With each passing day more regime targets are being hit and more coalition forces are pouring into the country. In the north, the 173rd Airborne Brigade has now fully deployed. Coalition aircrews are delivering devastating air attacks on the Republican Guard divisions that ring Baghdad and Tikrit. Coalition forces are coming from the north, they're coming from the south, and they're coming from the west, and the circle is closing.

The circumstance of the regime is such that Iraqi officials are spreading rumors that the coalition has entered into a cease-fire negotiation with the regime, and

that there is a third party peace plan under consideration. Their goal is to try to convince the people of Iraq that the coalition does not intend to finish the job. Since this broadcast is sent into Iraq, let me say this to all Iraqis who are listening: the regime is not telling the truth, there are no negotiations taking place with anyone in Saddam Hussein's regime. There will be no outcome to this war that leaves Saddam Hussein and his regime in power. Let there be no doubt. His time will end, and soon. The only thing that the coalition will discuss with this regime is their unconditional surrender.

So let's be clear. This war is well begun, but it is only begun. And while more tough fighting very likely will lie ahead, the outcome is assured. Saddam Hussein will be removed from power, the Iraqi people will be liberated. Coalition forces will go home as soon as the military mission is complete and return Iraq to the long-repressed Iraqi people.

General Myers.

Myers: Thank you, Mr. Secretary.

I'd like to express our regrets to the families of the Iraqis killed yesterday at the checkpoint near An Najaf. Loss of any innocent life is truly tragic.

Our policy of doing all we can to spare civilian lives stands in sharp contrast to the Iraqi regime's constant violations of the international laws of armed conflict and the Geneva Convention, let alone decent human behavior. The climate established by the Iraqi regime contributed to this incident.

Operation Iraqi Freedom continues unabated. Coalition aircraft again flew more than 1,000 sorties over Iraq in the last 24 hours. The air campaign continues to strike Iraqi leadership targets in Baghdad and throughout the country, to include air strikes on Iraqi command, control and communication facilities as well as air defense sites.

Coalition ground operations are continuing to isolate and destroy enemy forces throughout Iraq. The Medina, Hammurabi, Baghdad, and the Al-Nida Republican Guard divisions are continuously being struck by both our ground and air forces, significantly degrading their combat capability.

Our forces have fired more than 700 cruise missiles and dropped more than 9,000 precision-guided munitions since Operation Iraqi Freedom began.

I have one pre- and post-strike image for you today. The image is of the former

terrorist camp -- training camp at Khurmal. And I stress "former" since it is no longer an active terrorist camp. We struck this camp in northeastern Iraq near the Iranian border early last week with several dozen Tomahawk missiles and precision air strikes; then we followed by a ground and air attack conducted over the last couple of days with the help of Kurdish forces. The camp, in and around the villages of Gulp and Sargat, was being used by an estimated 3(00) to 500 Ansar al-Islam terrorists, with elements of the al Qaeda network in there with them. We believe they were developing poisons for use against civilians in Europe and the United States.

Initial estimates indicate that a significant number of terrorists were killed in the air and ground operation. Many of the deceased appear to be non-Iraqis who were members of Ansar al-Islam, al Qaeda, or perhaps other international terrorist organizations. Our teams are carefully examining the facilities to uncover any potential information or evidence that may still exist following the strikes.

I also have three videos for you today. The first one is of an F-15 dropping a precision-guided munition on a suspected SA-2 missile site southwest of Karbala.

The second one is of an AV-8B using a precision-guided munition to destroy a fuel tank in a revetment between Karbala and al Kut.

(Referring to videotapes) I think we're catching up. That looks like a fuel tank to me.

And the last video is of an F-16 dropping a precision-guided munition on a radar site at the Mudaysis airfield in western Iraq.

And lastly, it helps to remember that the effort to disarm Iraq and end the current regime is part of the global war on terrorism. And as we have said since September 11th of 2001, one of the keys to success is going to be patience. Patience is the one element of the current plan -- it's one element of the current plan, and it is paying off more and more dividends as the days go by.

And with that, we'll take your questions.

Rumsfeld: Charlie?

Q: General -- for General Myers. You just mentioned patience. Regarding the ground operations south of Baghdad, are your forces still feeling out or probing the Iraqi Republican Guard there? Have you begun any serious ground operations to destroy them?

Myers: There have been serious ground operations and there have been for some time. They've been conducting, as we mentioned before, some armed reconnaissance. I think there are bigger pushes that will be under way as soon as we're ready. Our -- what we're trying to do with both ground and air forces there is to decrease the combat capability of the divisions that have been arrayed south of Baghdad to stop the 1st Marine Division and the 3rd Infantry Division and the 101st [Airborne Division], from making progress towards Baghdad. And so we're trying to work on those divisions. We have degraded them to some degree.

Q: (Off mike) -- provide any details on these serious operations that you referred to -- and the ground operations?

Myers: Well, there are -- well, there -- a lot of these operations are ongoing. So I mean, the details I'm just not going to present to you right now. These things are perhaps under way, will be under way in the near future, and I just don't want to talk about them.

But there -- if you're getting to the point -- is there an operational pause? No, there is not an operational pause. Operations continue.

Q: Mr. Secretary, in your opening statement you mentioned, of ordinary Iraqis, that their fear is beginning to slip away. Can you elaborate on that, as to what evidence you see of that? And is the defeat of the Republican Guard a necessary step for their fear to disappear?

Rumsfeld: There's a good -- a growing amount of anecdotal evidence from various parts of the country, in the North, even in the -- certainly in the -- South, but also in the West and some places near Baghdad, of individuals indicating that the -- signs that some of the regime's families are leaving the country, is rippling through the society and causing morale to drop on the part of the people who support Saddam Hussein and for the others, who don't support him, to feel emboldened.

Q: And the Republican Guard -- is that a necessary step, to take that far enough that the balance will tip, as you've often said?

Rumsfeld: Probably. It's hard to tell. The Republican Guard has been taking a pounding for some days now. And some of the Republican Guard units from up north have been brought down south to try and reinforce Republican Guard units in the South that have been badly weakened. That process goes on. They're being attacked from the air. They're being pressured from the ground. And in good

time, they won't be there.

Q: And then what?

Q: Sir, I wanted to ask you a little bit about some of the rhetoric that's being used to describe the level of tyranny and oppression from Saddam Hussein -- from Hussein's regime.

Rumsfeld: Mmm hmm.

Q: Yesterday, from the podium, we were told that once the Iraqi people were liberated, they would be freed from "decades and decades of torture and oppression the likes of which I think the world has not seen before." I think even the kindest reading of that would say that was a slight overstatement. I'd like to get your sense of history here in terms of the Iraq regime, how they stack up against the Third Reich, Stalin, Pol Pot, Idi Amin. Just some perspective here for us.

Rumsfeld: Well, of course, throughout history, there have been a large -- regrettably, there have been a large number of regimes that have been just notably vicious. Certainly, some of the ones you've mentioned, Stalin ranks high; Adolf Hitler ranks high.

In terms of the modern period, it seems to me that Iraq clearly is up towards the top of the list. This is a regime that has prided itself on eliminating, brutally eliminating any dissent or opposition. We'll know an awful lot more when we get on the ground and have a chance to talk to the people and see more precisely exactly the techniques they've used. But we do -- if you read the various human rights groups and Amnesty International's description of what they know has gone on, it's not a happy picture.

Q: Would you agree that that was more of a blanket, uncategory statement -- a category statement than it should be.

Rumsfeld: I didn't see the statement.

Yes.

Q: Secretary, I want to ask you once again about criticism from current and former officers about the flow of forces to the region and also whether there are sufficient forces in Iraq. Someone said that there should have been at least two heavy divisions before you started to fight, and there are others who criticize you

for delaying signing deployment orders -- they point to the 3rd Armored Cav [alry] Regiment -- and also delaying calling up Guard and Reserve forces, that that added to some of the problems we're seeing now with lack of forces on the ground. And there are those that say that you're too enamored with air power over ground forces. I wonder if you could just comment on --

Rumsfeld: Well, why don't I --

Myers: Can I comment?

Rumsfeld: (Laughs.) Sure.

Myers: I would love to comment. My view of those reports -- and since I don't know who you're quoting, who the individuals are -- is that they're bogus. There is -- I don't know how they get started, and I don't know how they've been perpetuated, but it's not been by responsible members of the team that put this all together. They either weren't there, or they don't know, or they're working another agenda, and I don't know what that agenda might be. It is not helpful to have those kind of comments come out when we've got troops in combat, because first of all, they're false, they're absolutely wrong, they bear no resemblance to the truth, and it's just -- it's just -- harmful to our troops that are out there fighting very bravely, very courageously.

I've been in this process every step of the way as well. There is not one thing that General Franks has asked for that he hasn't gotten on the time line that we could get it to him. And it wasn't because of a late finding. It might be because we didn't have a, you know, a ship or something. But, I mean, it's not -- it's been for mechanical reasons, not because of administrative reasons, I can guarantee you that. Every member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff signed up to this plan and the way it was executed from the first day, and they'll be signed up to the last day, because we still think it's a good plan. Every member of General Franks' component commanders signed up to this plan as it was changed over time, and as it finally came down to be the one we went to war with. And they all stood up, and they gave a thumbs up to the plan.

So there may be others that have other ideas of how we should have done it. And I -- and, you know, God bless them, that's a great sport here inside the beltway. And I suppose if I -- when I retire, I'll probably have my comments, too: Gee, they ought to have more air power. (Laughter.) I wish the secretary would say we ought to be more air power-centric, perhaps. But I've never heard him say that --

Q: (Off mike.)

Myers: No. He hasn't said it. And that's not what he -- that's not -- I'm not going to speak for the secretary, but that's not the kind of comments that he's been making in this whole process. So that's -- it's been interesting, but it's not very useful to this discussion.

You know, we went in there with some very sophisticated objectives. We had diplomacy underway at the United Nations. We wanted to deploy a sufficient force, but not the kind of force that would make it look like diplomacy didn't have a chance to work. So we had to work that piece. General Franks -- and for the benefit of our troops -- wanted to protect tactical surprise. How do you protect tactical surprise when you have 250,000 troops surrounding Iraq on D-day? How do you do that? Well, you do it by the method he did it: by having the types of forces -- you do it by starting the ground war first, air war second. Do you think there was tactical surprise? I think there was. Do we have the oil fields in the south? About 60 percent of the oil wealth has been preserved for the Iraqi people. You bet. Have we had a Scud fired against Jordan or Israel yet? No. Why? Because we went in very early, even before the ground war, to secure those places. Do we have humanitarian supplies flowing into Umm Qasr now? Yes. Why? Because we put the ground forces in there early. Were we 200 miles inside Iraq in 36 hours? Yes.

Now, as we've talked about, any plan -- you know, we've just been watching some -- of the few moments I've had, I've tried to watch a little of the NCAA basketball. I'm sure Roy Williams, when he puts a plan together to go meet Arizona, he had a plan and he went to the floor that afternoon and said: "Okay, we're going to play Arizona, here's our game plan." And I imagine that plan didn't survive the first five minutes of their -- and so then he had to start adjusting. Are we going to adjust? You bet. Are we light on our feet, can we adjust? Yes. Can they adjust? They try, but it's futile. Okay?

So, I wish we just kind of -- this subject is not useful. It's not good for our troops and it's not accurate. You've got to be careful with the sources you use and try to figure out what they're really trying to say. I will stick by my statement that this is a great plan and it's one I've signed up to, it's one all the joint chiefs signed up to, and it's one we're going to see through to completion.

(Cross talk.)

Q: (Inaudible) -- in the field, and you say it's not helpful to the troops in the field. Some of the troops in the field are the ones criticizing the plan.

Myers: General Franks is not criticizing the plan and he's the one that gets the

rows for executing it. And I would only say this: that there is -- there could be a big difference in perceptions. And I'll go from the field -- and none of the perceptions are wrong, but it was like this seminar I was in at Harvard after the Gulf War. The comment was thrown out at this seminar, "Gee, the Army division commanders weren't happy with the air support they got." And I was surprised. So I called my good friend General -- at the break. I went out, put my quarter in the machine, called General Horner. And he was down -- I think commander of Space Command. I said, "General Horner, why would they say this?"

He says, "Well, it depends on what your perception is. If you're a division commander, you want all of the air support you can get. If you're the joint force commander, General Schwarzkopf, he's going to put the air where he thinks it's going to do the most good from an operational or strategic view point. Both views are right. Hey, the division didn't get as much as they wanted, it went exactly where you wanted it."

So, I think that's a little bit of what you're seeing. I don't think the perceptions coming from the field are necessarily wrong. But in terms of the sort of things I was trying to describe we wanted to accomplish early on, many of those people probably weren't aware of what we were trying to do early on.

Rumsfeld: I think also it's useful to put it into some historical perspective. I don't think there's ever been a war where there haven't been people opining about this or speculating about that or second-guessing on something else. As I say, we're 10 or 11 days into this, and these things have kind of a rhythm to them, and right now we're hearing all of the complaints and concerns and questions. One of the ways you can get a sense of how knowledgeable people are is if somebody says that they were sent with half of their forces, which I read in one paper -- fact is, that's just not true. So if the person believes that, you can think, gosh, if he thinks he was sent with half his forces -- there hasn't been delays in any major thing.

Before this started, the president sat down in a secure video with General Franks and each of the component commanders before he made a decision to go forward, and he asked them a couple of questions. He said, "is this war plan a good one and will it win?" And each single person, every component commander, they said directly to the president of the United States on secure video, "absolutely."

Q: Well was --

Rumsfeld: Shh. Just listen. (Laughter.)

Then he said, "Do you have everything you need?" Simple question. These are

adults. They're all four-stars. And they sat there, and they looked at the president in the eye and said "absolutely, we've got everything we need."

Now, is it, as General Myers says, perfectly possible that some person five layers down is short a meal for a day, or he his communications mixed up with somebody else's? You bet. This is an enormous process. There's something like -- what? -- 260,000 -- 300,000 people involved in this activity, and it is a monstrous task that they've performed, and they've done it brilliantly.

And I would -- without getting into the details, just simply say to the parents of the young people that are over there fighting for this country, that -- that they are, walking away, the best trained and the best equipped army on the face of the earth. They have what they need. They're well led. And this outcome is assured. They will be victorious. They will win. And they can be darn proud of them.

Myers: You bet.

Rumsfeld: Notwithstanding these little bits and pieces that you keep reading in the paper, most of which are by people who have never seen the war plan, probably never will, until it's all over.

Q: Mr. Secretary?

Q: Secretary, you've said the forces -- you've said that there was -- that nothing was going to change about the force flow to the region, that you were going according to plan, and that the number and type of forces that were flowing to the region --

Rumsfeld: I doubt if I said nothing's going to change in the future. I rarely predict into the future. I would just defy you to show me a quote like that.

Q: You said that -- I don't have a quote on me, but I know that you've said that you're going -- you're moving ahead with the plan and we're on plan. Let me just get my question out.

In recent days, evidence has been emerging that some units have been deploying more rapidly to the region than they had anticipated, than they had been told before; they're going by air instead of by sea. There are other units that have been told that they probably will be going in faster. Can you just characterize the changes that have been made --

Rumsfeld: Sure.

Q: -- to that deployment? Give you a chance to characterize it.

Rumsfeld: Sure. First of all, a plan is like a family budget. It's something someone sits down and devises, and then never lives with.

From the opening day, a war plan is -- the process of adjusting it begins. As everyone says, a war plan doesn't survive the first day of battle. Why? Because everyone goes to school on each other, and the plan is open and it's broad and it's flexible and it allows for all of those kinds of adjustments.

Now what kinds of changes have been made? The biggest and most obvious was the fact that the 4th Infantry Division did not go in through Turkey. It had to come down around to the south.

A second big change that was made, is that there was a very good piece of intelligence, and thanks to the skill of Tom Franks and his folks they were able to target a leadership compound before the ground war or air war had begun. And that was a target of opportunity, and it was seized, and it was successful, and it was an excellent piece of work.

A third thing that affects everything is, it's not knowable exactly how long a port will take to unload this ship or that ship. And so what happens is, they begin the flow of forces, and to the extent that they find that the port has freed up, they may accelerate and bring in additional ships. To the extent they find that those ships are unloading earlier, they may accelerate the flow of people into the area. And that's bound to go on. It's going to keep continuing to change various timetables as we figure out how things are moving and how they can manage the flow of forces.

But the essential flow of the forces was designed by General Franks and by John Handy at the TRANSCOM [U.S. Transportation Command] -- how long ago?

Myers: Well, in January sometime. It was all --

Rumsfeld: And it's been en route, with adjustments probably every day.

Myers: It goes back before then, but I mean, kind of the final iteration --

Q: But aren't you sending in elements of the 2nd LCR (sic) by air? You said --

Myers: There are a few hundred of the 2nd ACR [Armored Cavalry Regiment]

that are going by --

Q: Can you just characterize why they're going? Are they going to protect supply lines?

Myers: They're going because General Franks wanted that force now.

(Cross talk.)

Q: Mr. Secretary, the reception -- the perceptions that you're battling here are based on various individuals' expectations. How can you help us have a realistic expectation of what kind of casualties and battle deaths will happen in the future?

Now I know you're going to say it's unknowable, but that doesn't do much to help the American public get an idea of what they should be in for. Should the public expect that there might be several thousand U.S. combat deaths, and then you might hope that it would be some number significantly less than that? How can you set that expectation at a realistic level?

Rumsfeld: Well, first, it seems to me that you are -- the construct for your questions suggests that it would well serve the American people to have some number heaved out there. And we know from prior history and war after war that anyone who tries to estimate that is wrong. And they miss -- instead of serving the public, which I'm sure was well-intentioned, they misserve the public.

There are so many variables. Will a weapon of mass destruction be used the closer we get to Baghdad? How long will it last? What kinds of new things will occur that one has to adapt and adjust to? And it's not knowable. And I think that rather than suggesting to the American people that it would be a service to them to have a number pulled out of midair -- that would have been -- that's what would happen -- and have this situation, this war go up on the scoreboard with all -- many previous conflicts where people tried to do that, and then have it discovered afterwards, "oh, my goodness, that wasn't a help to the people, that was a hindrance to the people" -- I wouldn't even think of doing it.

(Cross people.)

Myers: Hold up. If I could just follow on expectations. I think what the American people should expect, and the Australian people, and the British people, that have their sons and daughters on the front line of this conflict, I think they should expect that they have everything they need before we commit them to the battle that they need, whether that's equipment, whether that's training, whether that's

leadership or whatever it is. And I can assure you that our job is to make sure they have that. And they should expect that, that they should not be committed until the odds are distinctly in our favor. And that's why I mentioned patience earlier in my remarks.

(Cross talk.)

Rumsfeld: Let me -- let just say one other thing, Jamie. The other thing is -- we can tell them three other things. There will be casualties: there already have been, and there'll be more. I mean, let there be no doubt about it. They'll receive the best medical care that's possible. I was out at Walter Reed [Army Hospital] seeing -- gosh, I think eight or 10 who were out there very recently -- Sunday. And they're getting wonderful care, God bless them. And last, that the American people will be told the truth as soon as it's possible to notify the next of kin about a[n] individual who's killed or wounded. Then the American people will be -- they'll be told directly what the casualties are. And that, it seems to me, is a service.

Yes.

Q: Yeah. Last week you all told us that the Republican Guard were dug in. You've been pounding them now for several days. Have you managed to pry them into movement, either to take on American forces or to retreat to Baghdad?

Myers: We haven't seen a retreat. We've seen dispersals. I think we showed some pictures of them dispersing into neighborhoods and things like that. We've seen reinforcements, and we continue to work away at them both from the ground and from the air.

Q: But still they are basically in defensive positions?

Myers: For the most part I think it's a fair way to characterize them, although there is some movement. They have moved -- they have moved some of the units around trying to reinforce. But some of them have been degraded to pretty low percentages of combat capability, below 50 percent in, I think, at least two cases, and we continue to work on them. So, I mean, it changes.

Q: Those cases meaning two divisions?

Myers: Right.

Q: General, can I follow up on a question, please, on this? You said that early on

that you were hitting these four Republican Guard divisions by air and ground. You may have covered this, but can you be a little more explicit? Do you mean -- by ground, do you mean mechanized patrols? Do you mean artillery only? Do you mean larger forces? What can you tell us about the kind of combat?

Myers: Actually, Ivan, I mean all of the above. Everything.

Rumsfeld: Pam?

Q: Could you tell us why the Free Iraqi Forces program has been suspended? There was so much enthusiasm about that. There's a release on the desk at the Pentagon.

And also, General Myers, just to clear up what you were saying about the progress that you've made because of the surprise of the war plan: Is it your understanding that the Iraqis were hunkering down waiting for an air war, and so they weren't reinforcing the oil fields, and that's what made you guys able to go in there and take them?

Rumsfeld: First, on the Free Iraqi Forces, I didn't know that the program would be shut down, but it seems perfectly logical, if it costs money, and the war is already under way and you're unlikely to train additional forces in time to be helpful. So it would be logical to discontinue it. The people that have already been trained are going to be engaged. There are other Iraqi forces, Free Iraqi Forces, that are engaged, and that --

Q: We were told to expect several hundred people were going to go through there, and as far as I know, there's 40 out there now and maybe another 40 that are going to be sent out. It's just surprising, considering the extent of briefings we got and how valuable they were said that they were going to be to the forces, for humanitarian aid and -- .

Rumsfeld: There are plenty of people who are anxious to participate and assist in the humanitarian aspects of it. And in terms of training more people at this stage, it just didn't -- I am assuming it just didn't --

Q: Is it a money problem or is it a --

Myers: It's not a money problem, it's more of a timing problem, trying to get the additional forces that we wanted to get. I think it was just, once the conflict started, it became -- it became less attractive to move them where we had to move them.

Rumsfeld: Jim? Did you have your hand up?

Q: Oh, I did, yes.

Rumsfeld: Go ahead. (Laughter.)

Q: Sorry. Has General Franks been given authority to go into Baghdad to -- you know, when he deems necessary? And if that's the case, would that be because you would expect the situation to change so rapidly that it would be better if he had the authority now rather than have to go back to you or to the president?

Rumsfeld: I don't know quite what you mean. General Franks was given the president's decision a week and a half ago to execute the plan, and he has the authority to execute the plan. He's not getting daily advice or calibration from General Myers or me or the president. I don't --

Myers: The president gave him the mission, disarm Iraq from its WMDs [weapons of mass destruction] and remove the regime, and that's the task he's about.

Q: Mr. Secretary, I think that last week, you were asked about reports of an uprising in Basra, and you said you didn't want to encourage Iraqis to rise up at that point because this regime was so dangerous. I wonder, where are we now? Would you now encourage Iraqis to rise up? And if not, what event might make that logical?

Rumsfeld: That's a good question. We know for a fact that what happened in 1991, when the Shi'a rose up, tens of thousands of them were murdered by Saddam Hussein's regime. There are still a lot of people alive in Iraq that remember that. And they are properly cautious. And I don't blame them. We know there are these execution death squads that are in the city, and they have caches of weapons, and they're killing people that try to escape and try to defect to assist the UK forces that are putting pressure on. They're advising the UK forces of places they could attack from the air, and our coalition aircraft are doing that. And they're doing a good deal of damage to these death squads.

It is not for me to decide when these people should rise up. But I think I mentioned my recollection of Hungary and the tragedy, where people thought they were going to get assistance, and it turned out the West was not in a position to assist them, and they rose up and were slaughtered. And I think that that's a call that the people in Iraq have to make. They're on the ground. It's their lives.

They'll have to decide when they believe that their best circumstance is to join the fight as opposed to preserving their lives as long as they do not see that immediately they can be free and liberated.

Now, will at some point a large number of the people in Iraq seek liberation and take steps their own? Yes. There are people taking steps already -- let there be no doubt -- and putting their lives at risk. But in terms of a mass uprising, that's not something I'm going to incite.

Q: Mr. Secretary, a follow-up. Might the defeat of these Republican Guard divisions that are blocking the way to Baghdad be that event?

Rumsfeld: Well, it could be. On the other hand, if you think about it, let's say the Medina Republican Guard element is destroyed this afternoon, which would be a nice prospect, and you're in Basra, or you're in some other town, and someone there has a gun at the head of your family telling you that "If you try to escape, if you try to assist, we'll kill you. And by the way, watch us; we'll kill a few other people right now just to make sure that you understand it." And they just shot a woman running across a bridge, trying to escape, in the back and threw her off the bridge into the water.

Now, one size doesn't fit all. You could take out the Republican Guard division and if somebody's still got a gun to their head, they're darn well not going to -- very likely -- not going to decide that it's time to have an uprising. It will happen; be patient. That country will be freed and liberated and this will be over. And how it will happen, how it will play out is going to be a function of the interaction between what they do and what we do. And if you want to guess which side's going to do the best, I would say, "bet on the coalition forces."

Yes?

Q: This is a strictly hypothetical question.

Rumsfeld: (Inaudible) -- I thought your arm was Jim's. (Laughter.)

Q: It seemed like you were looking at me -- (laughter) -- (inaudible) -- said Jim.

Given the fact Saddam Hussein is dead, what might explain, one, the amount of fear that the regime is still able to inspire in the people --

Rumsfeld: A pistol in someone's hand, shooting people.

Q: But is it word's not gone out that Saddam is dead --

Rumsfeld: I don't know he's dead.

Q: -- or is there possibly a center of gravity in that regime, apart from the personality of Saddam Hussein himself, that would make the regime dangerous even after he has disappeared?

Rumsfeld: I think for a period, if your suggestion is right that there could be a -- first of all, nobody knows where Saddam Hussein is, if he's alive or dead or his sons -- I don't know. But are there other people who are carrying on? Sure. The Minister of Information and the Minister of Defense and others are out there on television every day or two pretending that they're in charge. How is the command and control? My guess is it's less strong than it would be if Saddam Hussein were visibly himself on television, which he might be tomorrow, for all I know. But I think it's time to be patient a little bit and to just let things play out and not -- we don't need to hyperventilate about what's taking place. It is a tough business. Our folks are doing a superb job and we'll know in good time whether Saddam Hussein's alive or dead.

Yes?

Q: I'd just like to ask you both to follow up on some earlier points you made. Mr. Secretary, you said, you know, you're not giving Tommy Franks a day-to-day guidance on everything and that it's his war plan. But number one for you, could you help us better understand your management style of this war on a daily basis? How far do you go down into the decision making, into understanding the target list of results each day?

And Mr. Chairman, I hate to take you back to your initial conversation about the variety of reports in the news media, but I need to ask you to close that loop. You say it's --

Myers: I thought I did.

Q: Well, not for me, sir. You say it's distinctly unhelpful. But that suggests that your solution would be people who disagree shouldn't talk and reporters shouldn't report. And I guess I'm asking if you really think that's the right solution.

Myers: I'll take that one on real quick. I think -- I think for some retired military to opine as aggressively as some have done is not a -- is not helpful. I mean, it's one thing to have an opinion; it's another thing to express such dissatisfaction

with, quote, "the plan," that it's just not very helpful. I mean, when you have troops in combat, as most senior military would know, that's not the time to start putting, you know, different opinions, especially from senior people, on the table, particularly if they are not familiar with the plan. And, you know, to criticize something that they've never seen is pretty audacious, isn't it? So that's what I would say.

Q: And what about the news media?

Myers: The news media -- well, I would -- (laughs) -- all you can ever expect --

Rumsfeld: The Constitution.

Myers: No -- (laughter). Well, of course --

Rumsfeld: Don't forget the Constitution.

Myers: Yeah, I have it right here. No, the Constitution -- (laughter).

Q: It's a serious question.

Myers: No -- it is a serious question. And all -- all --

Q: Because you were fairly animated, more animated than I think I've ever seen you be on this subject.

Myers: I hope so. That's good. What I would -- and I meant to be, actually, or I wouldn't have been animated.

Q: You should see him when he talks about Kansas basketball.

Myers: Yeah. And I hope you learned something there, Charlie.

But the -- (laughter) -- the reporters just have to be fair and balanced. And that's all. And I would hope they could put this in context. You know, when you hear reports from the field, when you see the sort of straw snapshots we get of the battlespace, you know, somebody that has a little bit bigger perspective is useful. And sometimes reporters fill that. But reporters are going to have to report what they hear and see, that's --

Q: Are you having second thoughts on the policy of embedment?

Myers: I'm sorry?

Rumsfeld: Let me see if I can respond --

Q: Are you having second thoughts on the policy of embedment?

Rumsfeld: Wait, wait, wait, wait, wait. We're finishing. Just a minute.

Q: I'm following up.

Rumsfeld: How can you follow up until the first part's even answered? (Light laughter.)

The war plan. What happened there was rather natural. The president asked General Myers and me to provide a war plan at some moment in history. And we talked to General Franks, and he pulled off the shelf the Iraqi war plan, which had been there for some time. And he looked at it, General Myers looked at it, I looked at it, others looked at it, and all of us agreed that it was interesting, but it was really ancient -- years old -- and that it didn't reflect any of the lessons from Afghanistan; that it didn't reflect the current state of affairs in Iraq, and it didn't take into account the capabilities of the United States in terms of the shift away from dumb bombs to precision bombs.

And we all agreed that he should develop a plan that would be more appropriate. He did. And it was a process that he then worked through with the chiefs, and he worked through with the combatant commanders, and he worked through with the National Security Council, and ultimately ended up with a plan that is what we believe to be an excellent one. I keep getting credit for it in the press, but the truth is -- I would be happy to take credit for it, but I can't. It was not my plan, it was General Franks' plan, and it was a plan that evolved over a sustained period of time, which I am convinced is an excellent plan.

With respect to the day-to-day affairs here, what we do is Pete Pace and General Myers and Paul Wolfowitz and the chiefs and I meet with a small group of people every morning, and we get an intelligence upbrief -- update; we get briefed on a variety of other things. At some moment, we get briefed by the folks at the Central Command, generally General Abizaid or General Franks or one of the other individuals. And they kind of fill us in on what's taken place. And we go through the subject, "What can we do to be helpful? Are there things that you need from this end? Are there things that -- are there pieces of intel that we may have seen that you may not have seen?" And that's very rare. They seem to be -- they've got a very good fusion cell on intelligence there. And then, towards the

end of the day, we get another update. And the war is General Franks' to fight --

Q: General Myers --

Rumsfeld: -- and he's doing it.

We'll make this the --

Q: You mentioned the Ansar al-Islam strike and the searches that are going on there. Understanding that it's a huge facility, can you characterize what has been found so far? And secondly, can you also characterize the resistance you're seeing in the North?

Myers: In that particular site, there is no longer any resistance. It's been --

Q: No, I'm sorry. Separately, the resistance for the Iraqi Republican Guard --

Myers: Very little -- very little resistance in the North so far, and it's probably partially because we have such a large number of SOF [Special Operations Forces] teams in there, and now the 173rd [Airborne Brigade]. But the two Republican Guard divisions that were in the North have both moved south. The Adnan, you know, moved to Tikrit, and now it's even further south. And the Nebuchadnezzar has -- I think maybe has a brigade left in Kirkuk, but two brigades have moved south to join the defense of Baghdad.

And as far as the examination of things in there, we don't have anything current right now. We just aren't -- we haven't got reporting on that yet.

Q: Mr. Secretary, are you distancing yourself from the plans? You know, every time you say --

Rumsfeld: Oh, let me answer that. I'd love to.

Q: -- every time you say, "You know, it's not my plan; I'd like to take credit for it," the people around you are saying, "See? He is distancing himself."

Rumsfeld: Not at all. As I said, I think it is a superb plan. I was involved --

Q: But -- (off mike) -- with your philosophy and didn't your philosophy have a lot to do with how this came out?

Rumsfeld: Goodness, gracious! You know, it's like having a process that goes on for five or six months, with a lot of people in the room, people all talking, discussing, asking questions. I mostly ask questions. I --

Q: But you're the boss, though.

Rumsfeld: Well, I'm the boss, but I'm not the person who designs war plans.

Myers: And it changed. I mean, it changed in the last couple of months dramatically. I mean, this was complete -- I mean, it was changed a lot in the last --

Rumsfeld: And nobody should go out of here with any idea that I or anyone else are distancing themselves from that plan, because I am not. I think it is an excellent plan. I think Tom Franks is doing a superb job.

The truth of the matter is, however, it was a long, iterative process, and trying to take something that complex and that detailed and reach into it and say, "Gee, that was Dick Myers' idea," or "That was Pete Pace's idea," or "That was Rumsfeld" -- the reality is that the task was Tom Franks'. He did superbly, and he has then gotten us to all agree to it. Sure. Did we have a voice in it? Did we have a part in fashioning it? You bet.

Q: Well, we kept hearing that you kept sending the plan back -- wasn't imaginative enough --

Rumsfeld: You say keep hearing things. It's the same thing like we cut the force in half. The fact that one person prints it, and then everyone else runs around and copycats it and writes it again -- then pretty soon it's been printed 16 times, and everyone says, "Well, it must be true." That's nonsense.

I'll tell you, I told you earlier today what plan was sent back. And it wasn't ever sent back. It was pulled off the shelf. It was old and stale. It was looked at by everyone who looked at it and said, "No way! That's not going to work. Let's do one."

So Tom Franks --

Q: (Off mike) --get his way in the end? Did he get exactly what he wanted out of it?

Rumsfeld: He seems to tell the president and me and Dick Myers that he thinks

this is the plan he wants. And we have agreed to it. And we participated in it. And we like it. And no one's backing away from anything. And the fact that people have been writing this stuff over and over and over again and misinforming the world is really not terribly important. What's important is what we've said and that we're winning this activity, and it is going to end, and it will end with Saddam Hussein gone.

(Cross talk.)

Q Do the generals that work for you feel comfortable giving their honest assessment? Could you describe the situation where you've gone around and asked each general? And are you confident that they're not at all intimidated or that they don't want to be seen as part of the team, that they're giving you their honest assessment and that they gave it to you?

Myers: They'd be shirking their duty if they stand up in the United States military uniform and they don't say what they think, in front of General Franks, the secretary, or the commander in chief. That's their obligation. That's all our obligation. And that's the secretary's obligation. He takes the same oath.

Q Would you be happier if these retired generals were not on CNN and -- (off mike)?

Myers: No comment. But Pam, your -- (laughter).

Rumsfeld: (Laughing.) Some of them are pretty good.

Myers: Some of them are darn good.

Pam, didn't you talk -- you talked about the Free Iraqi Forces?

Q: Yes.

Myers: Let me just mention one thing that we have -- Hungary was a great supporter in enabling us to have a place to train the Free Iraqi Forces, and we've got to thank them.

Q General Myers --

Rumsfeld: Thank you very much.

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